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HIGH SCHOOL MASSACRE

School deputy: I'm not a coward

Through attorney, Peterson says he thought shots were outside

By David Fleshler
Staff writer

The school deputy who drew national condemnation for failing to confront the Stoneman Douglas shooter fought back Monday, arguing that his decision to not enter the building was made not out of cowardice but from his best assessment of the situation.

Deputy Scot Peterson, the school resource officer, had been accused of allowing students and teachers to face gunman Nikolas Cruz in a school building, while he remained sheltered outside. Broward Sheriff Scott Israel said Peterson should have "went in. Addressed the killer. Killed the killer." President Trump called Peterson a coward in the aftermath. After being suspended without pay last week, Peterson, 54, resigned.

"What I saw was a deputy arrive ... take up a position and he never went in," the sheriff said at a news conference.

But Peterson's lawyer, Joseph DiRuzo, called that account a "gross oversimplification."

"Let there be no mistake, Mr. Peterson wishes that he could have prevented the untimely passing of the 17 victims on that day, and his heart goes out to the families of the victims in their time of need," he said "However, the allegations that Mr. Peterson was a coward and that his performance, under the circumstances, failed to meet the standards of police officers are patently untrue."

Peterson

Peterson said the initial report was of firecrackers, not gunshots, in the 1200 building, where the killer was shooting his victims. When he reached the building, he heard gunshots, but "believed that those gunshots were originating from outside of any of the buildings on the school campus," the statement said, in a quotation attributed to Peterson.

In the event of outdoor gunshots, Sheriff's Office training calls for deputies to "seek cover and assess the situation in order to communicate what one observes to other law enforcement," the statement said.

"Consistent with his training, Mr. Peterson 'took up a tactical position between the 700-800 buildings corridor/corner," the statement said. Radio reports of a victim on the football field reinforced his belief that the shooter was outside, according to the statement.

He was the first sheriff's deputy to advise BSO dispatch of shots fired and he initiated the code red that

See **PETERSON, 10A**

Assault weapons ban axed in hearing

By Dan Sweeney
Staff writer

TALLAHASSEE — A rally outside the state Capitol featuring more than a thousand gun-control activists became a raucous Senate committee hearing Monday as gun-control activists filled the room, hooting and hollering as speaker after speaker demanded a ban on assault weapons, and hissing and booing as NRA lobbyist Marion Hammer warned that a proposed ban "stops short of banning every gun known to man."

The assault weapons ban was one of about half a dozen Democratic amend-

See **SENATE, 10A**

AMY BETH BENNETT/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Shooting survivor Maddy Wilford, who spent seven days in the hospital, gets a kiss from her father, David Wilford, at the news conference.

Runcie: Cruz halted mental help

By Scott Travis
Staff writer

When Nikolas Cruz turned 18, he refused to let the school district continue providing him with crucial mental health and other services — and there was nothing officials could do about it, Broward Schools Superintendent Robert Runcie said Monday.

Federal law tied their hands, he said, and also prevented them from forcing Cruz to attend a school for special

See **CRUZ, 10A**

More coverage inside

■ The Sun-Sentinel and other media companies file suit to force release of school security footage. **1B**
■ Trump vows to end years of gridlock on response to mass shootings. **9A**
■ Victim buried in Wade's jersey. **1C**

COURTESY

Wilford, a junior, played on the Stoneman Douglas basketball team. She is expected to fully recover.

'I'm so grateful to be here'

Student Maddy Wilford was so badly injured, first responders thought she was dead

By Brian Ballou
Staff writer

When Lt. Laz Ojeda of the Coral Springs Fire Department reached Maddy Wilford at Stoneman Douglas High School on Feb. 14, he thought she was dead. Her body looked pale and she wasn't moving, he recounted Monday.

Maddy had been shot three times and was barely alive. One bullet pierced her chest, another her torso and the third traveled through her right arm.

On Monday morning, Maddy's arm was heavily bandaged, but her cheeks were rosy and she smiled. Maddy was flanked by her parents, two doctors who treated her and Ojeda at an hour-long news conference.

"I'm Madeline Wilford," she said, and then paused for about 15 seconds. "And I'd just like to say that I'm so grateful to be here."

As Ojeda stood over Maddy on Feb. 14, another officer shook her to see if she would respond. She moved.

See **MADDY, 10A**

YOUR NATION, YOUR WORLD

Justices won't hear DACA appeal
The Supreme Court handed President Trump a significant defeat on so-called Dreamers. **3A**

World Trade Center leaders apologize
The apology came on the 25th anniversary of the bombing, for which they were unprepared. **4A**

Report: Little progress in 50 years
The report looked at how African-Americans fared on homeownership, unemployment and incarceration. **2A**

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